

## Activities of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation

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A study of the publications of this important body make most interesting reading. Not long ago there appeared in a daily paper an article on the theory and science of organisation. Therein the view was expressed that the study of this subject and the enunciation of its "laws" was essential and would perhaps be forthcoming at an early date. Perusal of the reports of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation indicate that no small knowledge of organisation has been needed to prosecute the multitude of tasks that have presented themselves for accomplishment since this Corporation obtained its Charter in November 1921. Three of the reports issued by the Corporation are now under consideration and their story is a considerable addition to the industrial history of our Empire and no less to the record of the application of science to agriculture and industry. As these reports deal succinctly with each aspect of the work done or projected under specific heads, it will only be following a good example to do so in these notes also.

The Cotton Industry Act of July 1923, by which the Corporation was empowered to collect a levy of 6d. per 500 lbs. gross on all raw cotton purchased by spinners in Great Britain during the next five years, imposed upon the Corporation a task which was described by the Earl of Derby at the second annual general meeting, in October 1923, as the only instance he knew of "a charge enforceable by law being collected without the employment of Government officials." It is noteworthy that the Administrative Council of the Corporation record an appreciation of the assistance rendered in the collection of the levy, by the Liverpool and Manchester Cotton Associations and by brokers not members of either body. Such a testimony to the practicability of securing voluntary aid in the administration of an Act of Parliament should prove of interest to all sociologists whether concerned with the cotton trade or not. That the expenditure items of the revenue and expenditure account admit of a balance, excess of revenue over expenditure, of £55,000 is explained in the Council's report in brief terms; during only part of the first year has the Corporation's financial position been placed on a firm basis, there has not been sufficient time for their plans for increasing cotton production to be more than set on foot. Such wise and far-seeing moderation is not too often exhibited and "cutting one's coat according to the cloth" in such matters is sufficiently noteworthy to be recorded when found. The hand of the late J. W. McConnel is no doubt to be seen in this careful laying of foundations and his address to the Administrative Council in March 1922, foreshadowed a policy of broad and secure foundations which would admit of the widest subsequent expansion.

In India the Corporation has kept in touch with the work of the Indian Central Cotton Committee, not only directly through its representative on that Committee, Mr. W. Roberts, but through its own Indian Sub-committee. This Sub-committee was one of six such Sub-committees suggested by the late Mr. McConnel but did not commence its activities as early as did those Sub-committees whose work lay in consideration of cotton growing problems in Africa. This policy of restraint was indicated by the Executive Committee of the Council in a report submitted to that body in December 1922, and was due to "the political and economic situation in India." It was decided to postpone action "until the Indian Central Cotton Committee had secured their cess" and were "in a position to carry out the recommendations of the Indian Cotton Committee." When subsequently the Act imposing a cess of 4 annas a bale on all raw cotton used by Indian mills or exported, was passed March 1923, the Sub-committee of the Corporation Executive was at once appointed and in response to its inquiries was informed that its aid would be welcomed by the Indian Central Cotton Committee in three matters. The first, "to supply reliable information as to cotton legislation in force or under consideration in various countries, particularly those within the British Empire and in Egypt" was at once complied with, but the second and third, to "stimulate the sale of Indian cottons in Great Britain," and "to ask the Liverpool Cotton Association to consider the possibility of providing a Futures Contract against which East Indian cottons would be tenderable" could not be disposed of summarily. Apropos of the third request, the Liverpool Cotton Association had already appointed a Special Committee to consider the question and readers of this *Journal* will recall Mr. A. Bryce Muir's references to the decisions of that Committee made at the Empire Textile Conference in



June last.\* The second request actively engaged the attention of the Indian Sub-committee and steps were taken to ascertain how Indian cottons could be put through spinning tests with a view to bringing not only their existence but their value to the notice of spinners. It was hoped, too, that the Shirley Institute would soon be in a position to undertake adequate tests of these cottons. As a first step the Oldham Master Cotton Spinners' Association arranged to carry out spinning tests on certain typical and already well-known Indian cottons, bales of which were purchased on the market in the ordinary way. A supply of improved cottons has been sent by the Indian Central Cotton Committee. These cottons will be similarly tested by the same Association so that they may be compared with those already recorded. Lord Derby, speaking of this work at the third annual general meeting, said "I think this as a particularly useful form of activity, because not only will it stimulate interest in these types of cotton, but it will, I believe, encourage Indian growers to improve the quality of their cotton." This expression of opinion may be heartily endorsed.

The story of the Corporation's activities in Australia will no doubt be more fully recorded at a later date. Up to the present the Corporation's aid has been extended chiefly to Queensland, whose Premier, Mr. Theodore, in 1922, expressed a desire for the services of an expert in cotton growing. Col. G. Evans, C.I.E., resigned his post of Director of Agriculture, Bengal, to take up an appointment under the Corporation, and in December 1922, proceeded to Australia to advise the Queensland Government on all matters pertaining to cotton culture. It is now reported that the Queensland Government has accorded Col. Evans the title of Director of Cotton Culture. This appointment, while in no way affecting the relations of the Corporation with Col. Evans, emphasises not only the Government's appreciation of his services but its real interest in cotton growing. An entomologist, Mr. E. Ballard, who has a special knowledge of cotton pests, has been appointed, and it is hoped that it will be possible to restrict an attack of pink boll-worm to the districts in which the pest is at present prevalent. Recently the Corporation's Director, Sir James Currie, discussed with Mr. Bruce, Prime Minister of Australia, and Mr. Theodore, Prime Minister of Queensland, matters connected with cotton growing in Australia. The chief topic of discussion was the formation of a central experiment station and the establishment of experimental farms in different areas. This and other aspects of the problem of growing cotton in Australia engaged the attention of a Cotton Advisory Committee, whose first report has reached the Corporation and has been carefully considered by the Executive. Chief among the representations made in this report is one that two experiment farms be set up, one in New South Wales and the other in Queensland. The expense connected with this undertaking is high, but the Executive has recommended a generous grant of £3,000 a year for five years so long as it is satisfied that the work is being carried out efficiently. The Corporation indicates its recognition that "lack of population will inevitably prevent a large output from Australia for some time to come, but this fact and the comparatively high costs of production only make it the more important that the cotton should be of the highest quality compatible with the soil and climate."

Early in 1923, Mr. G. F. Keatinge, C.I.E., following an extended tour in South Africa as a Commissioner from the Corporation, rendered a comprehensive report on the possibilities of cotton growing in the Union. This report, a compilation of over 60 pages, was obviously necessary before any definite steps could be taken by the Corporation, and while awaiting its completion the cotton growers of South Africa were offered prizes for their 1923 crops up to £250 in value. Cotton was submitted by 19 candidates, each of whom grew 50 acres or upwards. Entries in the class of from 10 to 50 acres of cotton were too few and the prizes were withdrawn. The awards are announced now and the scheme has been regarded as satisfactory. It affords an instance of the catholicity of the Corporation in their labours to encourage cotton growing throughout the Empire. Mr. Keatinge's report has, of course, involved the consideration of far bigger schemes. As a first step the Corporation offered to the Union Government to appoint a small expert staff to work under the Union's Department of Agriculture, retaining for their experts the right to report to the Corporation through the



Minister. This offer was accepted and General Smuts, then Prime Minister, received a deputation from the Corporation and discussed a scheme for the utilisation of the services of the Corporation's experts and for the active encouragement of cotton growing. It is gratifying to learn from these recent reports that the change of Government in South Africa will in no way affect future development on the lines urged by the Corporation. A nucleus of the staff to be provided has already proceeded to Africa and the prospects are good. Some land purchase difficulties seem to be anticipated but it is to be hoped that these difficulties will be overcome.

In the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which from the first the Corporation has regarded as one of the most promising countries for development in connection with cotton cultivation, progress has been recorded of a substantial nature. Two principal areas are under development, the Gezira Plain lying south of Khartoum and between the White and Blue Niles, and the Kassala district some 250 miles east of Khartoum, being that part of the Sudan bordering upon the Italian colony of Eritrea. The Gezira irrigation scheme to be consummated by means of a dam at Makwar on the Blue Nile was, owing to the great war, held up, but the Sudan Government recognising the essential importance of the scheme guaranteed the balance of the loan necessary to finish the work, and it is expected that the project will be completed next year. This brings some 300,000 feddans into the category of potential cotton growing districts and it remains to be seen how soon the activities of the Sudan Plantations Syndicate, which finances cotton growing in that district, can translate the potential character of the area into actual cotton growing. The Kassala district is watered by the flooding of the river Gash, which, emerging into the area from Italian territory, eventually loses itself in the desert by a series of bifurcations constituting what is known as the Gash Delta. The quantity of cotton grown in this district has been limited by transport difficulties and to overcome these the Sudan Government built a railway line from Thamiam, on the main Port Sudan/Atbara line, to Kassala. On this line the recent crop has been transported, but experience of a flood period is needed so that the engineers may ascertain the necessary strength requirements for bridges, culverts &c. It is anticipated that all such work will be completed and the line in full working order for the next crop. Cotton development is in the hands of the Kassala Cotton Company, which works in partnership with the Sudan Government and the native cultivator. The Corporation holds a financial interest in this company to the extent of £10,000 6% Debentures and £5,000 worth of Ordinary Shares, and has played a considerable and worthy part in the negotiations which led up to these developments. Mr. W. H. Himbury, of the British Cotton Growing Association, writing of Kassala in 1923, on return from a visit thereto, said "Shortly we may expect quite an important increase in the present production of 4,000 bales. Kassala is, of course, not the Gezira; it is limited to the lands irrigated by the Gash, which may vary from 60,000 to 200,000 feddans, or a maximum production of 100,000 bales." This is a sound opinion and indicates the value of the work. In still another direction the Corporation has been able to be of service to the Sudan. The Sudan Government decided, in 1923, to appoint a Commission to advise them on the programme of agricultural research which should be followed. On the suggestion of the Corporation, Sir John Russell, F.R.S., and Dr. Martin Leake were invited to carry out this work. These experts made their report and called attention therein to the need for research work on the soil in order to deal with the problems that are likely to arise from salting, a trouble in all irrigation schemes where natural drainage is deficient. As the outcome of this report and negotiations between the Sudan Government and the Sudan Plantations Syndicate, a research station and seed farm is to be established at Gezira. Though this establishment is to be managed jointly by the Government and the Syndicate there will be a Supervisory Committee in this country upon which the Corporation has a representative, Sir James Currie. In passing it may be urged that, with the establishment of so many and so varied research organisations, both at home and in the Colonies, all concerned with textile and allied subjects, some attention should be paid to co-ordination of effort and the avoidance of overlapping; an Alexander of textile technology and science could here find a fresh world to conquer.

The late Chairman of the Council, Mr. J. W. McConnel, was responsible for the establishment, as already mentioned, of sub- or regional committees dealing



with specific cotton growing districts. The work of those committees concerned with East and West Africa has been no less arduous or unproductive than that of the committees dealing with South Africa, India, and Australia, whose efforts have come under review in the foregoing paragraphs. In some ways their work has been, no doubt, more difficult as the districts dealt with may be described as less organised and in all ways more primitive. In West Africa, between Dahomey on the West and the French Cameroons on the East, lies the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, divided into the Northern and Southern Provinces. From February to July 1921, at the instance of the Empire Cotton Growing Committee of the Board of Trade, Sir Hector Duff toured these provinces and on his return rendered a report thereon from the point of view of cotton growing. Sir Hector's report\* was a formidable, albeit readable and constructive, document and was no doubt of great value to the Corporation when directing attention to this colony. Through the efforts of the British Cotton Growing Association the cultivation of cotton had made considerable progress up to the year 1922; the report of that Association for 1923 showed that in 1922 13,600 bales of 400 lbs. had been produced, while in 1921 as many as 31,500 such bales were grown. The Corporation thus had to focus attention upon the question of rendering assistance in every way possible to the activities of British Cotton Growing Association. The visit of the Director of Agriculture of Nigeria gave an opportunity which was quickly used and, following discussions, two main propositions were made. The first came from the Director of Agriculture that the Corporation should provide a staff of experts, not to supplant the officials of the Department of Agriculture, but to bring expert knowledge to bear upon the specific problem of growing cotton. The second was advanced by the Corporation that natives should be urged to move from densely populated regions where cotton was not grown to less populated areas near the new railways where cotton could be grown, thus forming "cotton colonies." The final outcome of these proposals was that the Director of Agriculture obtained permission to augment his own staff and that the Nigerian authorities did not consider the "cotton colonies" project feasible. But the Corporation's efforts have borne fruit in hastening the achievement of a higher state of efficiency of the new railways.

While cotton growing in West Africa is confined chiefly to Nigeria, in East Africa the colonies where cotton is grown, or where it is hoped eventually to grow appreciable amounts of cotton, are more numerous. Chief among them from the point of view of output being Uganda, a large territory of some 110,300 square miles with an estimated population of three millions. Since 1904, when 54 bales of cotton were grown and exported, development has been steady, until, in 1923, a total of 85,000† bales was reached. Questions of transport and of taxation have come under consideration by the East Africa Sub-Committee of the Corporation, and the Colonial Office have from time to time been informed of the Corporation's views on such matters. A practical piece of work done has been the supply of, in 1923, 90 ox-drawn ploughs with adequate spare parts to be distributed to native cultivators by the Uganda Department of Agriculture. In 1924 a further 300 ploughs have been sent, and the demand may be said to have thoroughly justified the supply. Four holders of Studentships under the Corporation have been placed under the Department of Agriculture with an arrangement that when vacancies occur in the regular staff of the Department these men shall be absorbed first. Another instance of practical help! It is now reported also that two motor tractors with ploughs and harrows, presented to Uganda by the Empire Cotton Growing Committee in 1921, have been of great service in opening up land at the foot of Mount Elgon, which thus becomes available for cotton growing. Important railway developments are also reported, thus rounding off a sequence of thoroughly sound work. The demonstration cotton plant at Wembley used Uganda cotton entirely, itself an admirable tribute to the work done for Empire cotton growing in Uganda.

Two other East African Colonies must be mentioned, though briefly; Tanganyika, formerly German East Africa, and Nyasaland, formerly very closely connected with the British Central Africa Co., which company still has large areas under cotton in the territory. Tanganyika was visited in 1921 by Major

\* *J. Text. Inst.*, 1921, 12, 468.

† Figure given by British Cotton Growing Association.



H. Horne, at the instigation of the Empire Cotton Growing Committee, and his report was that cotton was being produced and could, under adequate guidance and assistance, be grown in still larger quantities provided certain contingencies were overcome. The first step taken by the Corporation was to provide an expert staff; that being done, the matter of financial aid arose and the Corporation also acted promptly in this respect. An offer of £5,000 was made to the local Government, but a series of misunderstandings and points of difference arose, and up to the third annual meeting, in October last, the Corporation has been forced to report that a satisfactory basis of co-operation has so far not been found. Lacking further information it is impossible to analyse the position here outlined; it is obvious, however, that "a basis of co-operation" ought soon to be found. Empire cotton growing cannot be stopped though it may be retarded, unfortunately. A more encouraging story can be told of the Nyasaland Protectorate, where the Corporation's expert, Mr. H. C. Sampson, has since December 1922, been working in close co-operation with the local Government's Agricultural Department, the chief necessity being to improve the quality and the yield per acre. Soon a small experiment station was asked for and was established conjointly by the Government and the Corporation. The red boll-worm proved a serious pest in the Protectorate and an entomological assistant to Mr. Sampson was secured, whose services have been successful to a considerable degree. In this respect Mr. W. H. Himbury has said\* that the "Cotton Pest" Act enforces the uprooting and burning of every cotton bush before the end of November and "the results of these methods have been found very satisfactory." As in all African cotton growing districts, transport is a large problem; in Nyasaland it exists and is being attacked by the Corporation along lines of proven value, i.e., by drawing the attention of the Government officials concerned not only to the needs of the area, but to the economic value of such railways as well as to means of provision, suggested routes, and the incidence of over-high freight rates.

No account of Empire cotton growing would be complete without reference to Kenya, though no great crop can be recorded. The local Government has turned its attention to native development of cotton, and with an extended railway system a large area will be opened up to this crop. The Government have made inquiries as to the aid the Corporation might render, and no doubt later reports will provide information as to the reply.

In other parts of Africa the Corporation has taken steps to encourage cotton growing. To the Northern Rhodesian Agricultural Society a donation of prize money for cotton exhibits was given. In both Southern and Northern Rhodesia negotiations are taking place between the Governments concerned and the Corporation, mainly along the line of the supply of experts in cotton growing and in combating insect pests.

In the West Indies co-operation has been possible between the Corporation and the authorities of the Agricultural College at Trinidad, which was opened in October 1922. A contribution of £500 a year for two years was made by the Corporation on the grounds that the College would provide training in general tropical agriculture, an essential for all those whose ultimate work is cotton growing. By the arrangement made a limited number of men sent out by the Corporation will be received at the College without payment of fees. The Corporation has also supplied funds and a research worker to continue the work on the genetics of Sea Island Cotton begun by Dr. S. C. Harland in 1920. The grant referred to above has been renewed and a contribution of £2,000 for buildings and endowment has also been made. Six of the Corporation's students are working at the College and an excellent liaison seems to have been established.

The foregoing paragraphs do not exhaust the list of countries wherein the influence of the Corporation has been felt or from which appeals for assistance have come. Ceylon, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, and Fiji could be mentioned, but neither space nor the stage to which negotiations have advanced make such reference possible as yet. Before dealing with what may be described as the "domestic" developments of the Corporation, it is to be recorded that the whole question of transport in cotton growing countries has always been under the eye of the Corporation. Urgent representations that railways are needed have been

\*In paper read to Empire Textile Conference, June, 1924. *J. Text. Inst.*, 1924, **15**, p177



noted and, to quote Lord Derby, "will go on till the crack of doom." But for cross-country work and for unmetalled roads other forms of transport are needed. A Committee of the Corporation has examined witnesses as to local conditions and as to the types of motor transport that might be suitable, and as an outcome of their investigations and reports it has been decided to send out to Nigeria for trial two transport units of the "track" type. These will be used under the exact conditions for which transport is so urgently needed and full report made later.

In conclusion, very brief reference must be made to three "domestic" branches of the Corporation's activities. As constant evidence was forthcoming that the services of experts in cotton growing, entomology &c. were urgently needed, the Empire Cotton Growing Committee inaugurated a scheme of post-graduate studentships which has been followed up and extended by the Corporation. Four such studentships were held in 1921-22 and the number has been steadily increased, so that at present twelve studentships are available, graded into senior and junior types. Studies are pursued at Cambridge, Rothamsted, The Imperial College of Science and Technology, or at the West Indian Agricultural College, Trinidad. All men so trained have been absorbed into the staffs of Colonial Agricultural Departments or are employed by the Corporation. Research facilities have not been neglected and an expert Sub-Committee reported to the Corporation on the facilities available at the various Universities for work on scientific subjects of importance to cotton growing. The outcome was that grants have been made to the Botanical Department of the Imperial College of Science and Technology; to the Plant Genetics Department, School of Agriculture, Cambridge; to the Soil Physics Department, Rothamsted Experimental Station; and to the Botanical Department, University of Manchester. These grants are to enable the selected institutions to maintain the services of a specialist to devote himself to research in a subject germane to cotton growing. A sum of £2,000 has also been set aside for grants in aid of special pieces of research and a co-ordinating Committee has been appointed to maintain close touch between the Corporation and the British Cotton Industry Research Association. The advisability of establishing a Central Research Institute is also under consideration. The Corporation have also for 1924 issued a Journal, the *Empire Cotton Growing Review*, which has attained a high standard and seems likely to be of material assistance in the empire-building undertaken by the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation.

### Adoption of the word "Rayon" in place of the words "Artificial Silk"

The Council of the Silk Association of Great Britain and Ireland, at a meeting held on 12th November 1924, signified by resolution its approval of the adoption of the word "Rayon" in place of the two words "Artificial Silk," as descriptive of the synthetic fibre hitherto known as artificial silk. The Secretary was therefore instructed to advise all producers, users, manufacturers, dealers and merchants to adopt forthwith the use of the word "Rayon" in place of the two words "artificial silk."

It should be noted that it would be incorrect to use the word "Rayon" in connection with "Silk," as, for instance, "Rayon Silk," the object being that by eliminating the word "silk" the use of the one word "Rayon" as a descriptive term for all classes of artificial silk shall prevent the occurrence of cases of misdescription. Goods made from artificial silk should likewise be described as made from "Rayon" as, for instance, in the place of "Artificial Silk Hose Stockings," the words "Rayon Hose" or "Rayon Stockings" should be used, and so on.

In adopting the use of the word "Rayon," the Silk Association follows the lead of the United States, where it has already been adopted officially by the Silk Association of America, the National Retail Dry Goods Association, and the Association of Producers of the Yarn or Fibre, and the trade generally. The resolution of this Association was passed unanimously on 12th November, subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions which, having now been completed, the resolution referred to now takes effect.